

# **President Trump's Decision to Withdraw the U.S. From the Paris Climate Agreement Makes America Less Safe**

## ***Security Officials & Experts Confirm: Climate Change is a National Security Threat***

***Last week, President Trump announced that he is withdrawing the United States from the Paris Climate Accords – an agreement signed by almost 200 countries that will work to combat climate change. This decision is an abdication of American leadership, is harmful to our national security and America's credibility, and represents another broken promise from President Trump to keep America safe.***

“For more than a decade, military leaders have said that extreme weather patterns and rising sea levels are aggravating social tensions, destabilizing regions and feeding the rise of extremist groups like al Qaida and the Islamic State.” [McClatchy, [6/1/17](#)]

“[President Trump's] disregard for climate science is at odds with the U.S. military's consensus on the risks of climate change to security.” [Voice of America, [6/2/17](#)]

***Trump Administration officials have confirmed that climate change poses a serious threat to national security:***

**Secretary of Defense James Mattis:** “Climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today... The effects of a changing climate — such as increased maritime access to the Arctic, rising sea levels, desertification, among others — impact our security situation... I will ensure that the department continues to be prepared to conduct operations today and in the future, and that we are prepared to address the effects of a changing climate on our threat assessments, resources, and readiness.” [From unpublished answers to Senators following his confirmation hearing in January; reported by Business Insider, [5/31/17](#)]

**Secretary of State Rex Tillerson:** “I think it's important that the United States maintain its seat at the table in the conversation on how to address threats of climate change. They do require a global response. No one country is going to solve this alone.” [The Atlantic, [1/11/17](#)]

**Director of National Security Daniel Coats:** “The trend toward a warming climate is forecast to continue in 2017... Global air pollution is worsening as more countries experience rapid industrialization, urbanization, forest burning, and agricultural waste incineration... People in low-income cities are most affected, with the most polluted cities located in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Public dissatisfaction with air quality might drive protests against authorities, such as those seen in recent years in China, India, and Iran. Heightened tensions over shared water resources are likely in some regions.” [Worldwide Threat Assessment, [5/11/17](#)]

***The Department of Defense has sounded the alarm on climate change, describing it as a “threat multiplier:”***

**2016 Department of Defense Arctic Strategy:** “Diminishing sea ice will give rise to new economic opportunities in the region while simultaneously increasing concerns about human safety and protection of a unique ecosystem that many indigenous communities rely on for subsistence. In the near term, the increasing rate of coastal erosion similarly will threaten DoD's Arctic coastal infrastructure. [Department of Defense Arctic Strategy, [12/2016](#)]

**2014 Department of Defense Quadrennial Defense Review:** “Climate change may exacerbate water scarcity and lead to sharp increases in food costs. The pressures caused by climate change will influence resource competition while placing additional burdens on economies, societies, and governance institutions around the world. These effects are threat multipliers that will aggravate stressors abroad such as poverty, environmental degradation, political instability, and social tensions – conditions that can enable terrorist activity and other forms of violence.” [Department of Defense, [6/2/17](#)]

**Pentagon Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap** “Among the future trends that will impact our national security is climate change. Rising global temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, climbing sea levels, and more extreme weather events will intensify the challenges of global instability, hunger, poverty, and conflict. They will likely lead to food and water shortages, pandemic disease, disputes over refugees and resources, and destruction by natural disasters in regions across the globe. In our defense strategy, we refer to climate change as a “threat multiplier” because it has the potential to exacerbate many of the challenges we are dealing with today – from infectious disease to terrorism. We are already beginning to see some of these impacts. A changing climate will have real impacts on our military and the way it executes its missions.” [[Climate Change RoadMap 2014](#)]

*The Intelligence Community has also voiced concerns about how climate change could exacerbate or spark crises:*

**Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper:** “Extreme weather, climate change, environmental degradation, related rising demand for food and water, poor policy responses, and inadequate critical infrastructure will probably exacerbate—and potentially spark—political instability, adverse health conditions, and humanitarian crises in 2016.” [Worldwide Threats Report, [2/9/16](#)]

**Former Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Analysis and Chairman of the National Intelligence Council Dr. Thomas Fingar:** “We judge global climate change will have wide-ranging implications for U.S. national security interests over the next 20 years . . . The United States depends on a smooth-functioning international system ensuring the flow of trade and market access to critical raw materials such as oil and gas, and security for its allies and partners. Climate change and climate change policies could affect all of these—domestic stability in a number of key states, the opening of new sea lanes and access to raw materials, and the global economy more broadly—with significant geopolitical consequences.” [Congressional Testimony for the record, [6/25/08](#)]

*National security experts agree climate change is a national security threat and must be addressed:*

**Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta:** “The President’s announcement to leave the Paris Accords along with his statements in Europe last week that raised questions about our commitment to NATO mark the sad demise of a 70-year era of American global leadership. ‘America First’ policies are threatening our strategic interests and eroding our moral standing in the world... Today’s announcement is a dangerous retreat of U.S. leadership in making our world safer and more secure for future generations.” [Statement, 5/1/17]

**Former Defense Secretary Ash Carter:** “Carter said a lukewarm response to climate change could ‘increase the frequency, scale, and complexity of future missions, including defense support to civil authorities, while at the same time undermining the capacity of our domestic installations to support training activities.’” [Business Insider, [6/4/17](#)]

**Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, U.S Navy (Ret), Member of the Advisory Board, The Center for Climate and Security, Former Commander, U.S. Pacific Command:** “Secretary Mattis’ testimony is not surprising. As a global military leader he understands that the effective defense of our nation and our significant national interest requires that all threats to our security be considered and addressed, including the real threats posed by

*Office of Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, 6/5/2017*

climate change. Hopefully, Secretary Mattis' leadership on the issue will translate into U.S. policies that help us manage the unavoidable, and avoid the unmanageable." [Center for Climate Change and Security [3/16/17](#)]

**General Ron Keys, U.S Air Force (Ret), Member of the Advisory Board, The Center for Climate and Security, Former Commander, Air Combat Command:** "No surprise that DoD takes a pragmatic position on the effects of Climate Change... it already impairs their ability to base, train, test, mobilize, deploy, and conduct operations here and abroad, while threatening to stretch their forces to the breaking point. DoD has been monitoring the risks of Climate Change since at least 2003 and they clearly see the instability it brings to already precarious situations around the world... situations they have to be prepared for when they are called upon." [Center for Climate Change and Security [3/16/17](#)]

**Lieutenant General John G. Castellaw, USMC (Ret), Member of the Advisory Board, The Center for Climate and Security, Former Chief of Staff, U.S. Central Command:** "Secretary Mattis, as a Marine I know and have served with, understands that climate change can have a significant impact on our military operations in the future, and that we're more secure if we deal with this problem seriously – as we do other threats to the nation. That's the kind of clear-headed leadership that the military has brought to the climate change issue across both Republican and Democratic administrations. Secretary Mattis is no exception." [Center for Climate Change and Security [3/16/17](#)]

**Joan D.B VanDervory, Member of the Advisory Board, The Center for Climate and Security, Former Deputy Director for Ranges, Sea and Airspace in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Readiness):** "...Climate change is, without a doubt, a game changer: A game changer with regard to increased global instability due to drought, rising seas, and famine as well as the increased vulnerability of our ranges, training land, and infrastructure, both in the US and abroad. The Department's continued efforts to assess, adopt risk reduction strategies, and develop adaptive planning approaches will only serve to strengthen our national security now and into the future." [Center for Climate Change and Security [3/16/17](#)]

**U.S. Army Brigadier Gen. Gerald Galloway:** "Climate change is already impacting the military itself, how it operates, and the countries in which we have an interest where it can result in instability, which leads to violence, which leads to conflict and where we end up moving our young men and women overseas." [McClatchy, [6/1/17](#)].

**American Security Project:** "Climate change is a national security threat that America's military, and militaries around the world are taking seriously. ... Climate change alone will not cause wars, but it serves as an 'Accelerant of Instability' or a 'Threat Multiplier' that makes already existing threats worse." [[American Security Project](#)]

**Center for Climate and Security:** "There are few easy answers, but one thing is clear: the current trajectory of climatic change presents a strategically-significant risk to U.S. national security, and inaction is not a viable option..." [Reuters, [9/14/16](#)]

***Democrats will continue to urge Republicans to listen to the U.S. military and intelligence communities – in addition to the majority of Americans, business leaders, public health experts, and others – and recognize the real and serious threat of climate change. By retreating from our responsibility to lead a global response to this threat, President Trump and Congressional Republicans are undermining our national security.***